

The latest developments in WMO Regional Association VI (Europe) and the plan towards the WMO Conference on socio-economic benefits of NMHSs

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The WMO Regional Association VI (Europe) held its fourteenth session in Heidelberg, Germany, from 7 to 15 September 2005. Regional cooperation was a key theme of the session. The most important outcome of the session was a decision to develop the Regional Strategic Plan for the Enhancement of National Meteorological and Hydrological Services (NMHSs). The goal of the plan is to strengthen the capabilities of all NMHSs throughout the Region by providing appropriate meteorological, hydrological and related services in the prevention and mitigation of natural disasters, protection of life and property, safeguarding of the environment and contributing to sustainable development. The session adopted an Action Plan for implementation while the Strategic Plan is being developed. The Association decided to implement a network of multiple multifunctional centers and/or specialized centers on a pilot basis as the structure for implementing Regional Climate Center activities in the Region. It also designated two new Regional Instrument Centers for RA VI.

Governments desire to respond to population growth, to the need to reduce poverty, increase water and food security, improve health and ensure safety. Nations aim towards reducing and mitigating natural disasters, improving and sustaining health, adapting to climate change, improving the management of energy and water resources, managing and protecting ecosystems, developing sustainable agriculture. They also seek to reduce the risks that affect finance, recreation and tourism, transportation and other sectors of society. To more fully realize all these will require a more effective use of weather, climate and water information. Inter alia, it is in this connection that a conference entitled Secure and Sustainable Living: Social and Economic Benefits of Weather, Climate and Water Services will be held in Madrid, Spain, from 9 to 23 March 2007. Some expected outcomes of the Conference are:

- A review and synthesis of the way everyday social and economic decisions are influenced by weather, climate and water information and the benefit of this information to society;
- An examination of the decision-making process and how information providers need to adapt to decision-makers' needs;

- A comprehensive publication on the global social and economic benefits of meteorological information, including case studies, best practices and recommendations.

The Conference will provide an excellent opportunity for decision-makers from the public and private sectors, physical and social scientists from government laboratories and academia, and members of the operational and research meteorological and hydrological communities to interact on topics of major societal importance. As part of the preparatory process, national and regional activities are planned to promote the undertaking of, and partnership in, socio-economic valuation case studies.